The Story of Ghosting - A German Music Project

In 1988, an older classmate gave Sascha a cassette whose A-side was labeled "The Sisters of Mercy" and the B-side "Siouxsie and the Banshees." Sascha was still quite young and convinced that the sides were mislabeled, because on the side marked "The Sisters of Mercy," there was a man singing with a very deep voice, which to him did not sound at all like the Sisters. On the other side, however, there was a rather high-pitched female voice, which sounded much more like a "sister." Confusing "The Sisters of Mercy" with a girl band was the starting point for Sascha's interest in what was then called New Wave.

Previously, he had mainly been interested in classical and medieval composition techniques, which he learned in school and practiced autodidactically. He was also fascinated by the possibilities of technology. He loved computers, which he programmed at the time, as well as synthesizer music, especially Jean-Michel Jarre, Kraftwerk, and D.A.F. He was particularly impressed by Jean-Michel Jarre, who used exclusively electronic means and synthesizers to implement classical composition techniques. Meanwhile, Kraftwerk and D.A.F. fascinated him with their minimalist approach to composition.

At the end of the 1980s, however, it was quite difficult for a young person in Bad Ems to get music in the style he was seeking. There was no internet where everything could be accessed with a click, and there were neither record nor cassette stores in Bad Ems. CDs were not yet widespread at that time. Every piece of music Sascha obtained felt like a gift from heaven—almost something sacred—because it was not easy to get hold of such things.

There were exactly two other bands that absolutely fascinated him back then, because they were something completely new that he had never heard before: "Dead Can Dance" with their album *Within the Realm of a Dying Sun* and Coil with *Horse Rotorvator.* After listening to these records day and night for months, he desperately wanted to find new music in that style. But as mentioned, it was extremely difficult to get such music, and the cassettes in their hundredth copy were not of the best quality either.

Because there were hardly any bands producing that kind of music, Sascha decided he would write new music in this style himself. At that time, he had no intention of forming a band or releasing anything. He simply wanted to create new music for himself, something he liked, because what he already had was

not enough—and there was nothing new. In the end, it was purely an act of desperation.

So, he got his first synthesizer—or rather, in this case, a sampler: the Roland W-30. On this device, he created his first compositions, which were still heavily influenced by his beginner phase, showing a distinctly childlike naivety in terms of composition and lyrics.

Of course, he recorded his pieces onto cassettes and played them for himself and for others. Since some people around him liked the music, they urged him to perform on stage.

Back then, however, it was not at all common to perform alone. A typical rock lineup was still the norm on stage—drums, of course real ones, plus an electric guitar, an electric bass, and if someone played keyboards, they had to be played live. Electronic music was hardly appreciated or taken seriously at that time. People spoke dismissively of canned music—music "out of a can," which was not considered real or legitimate.

In his class, there was a classmate he got along with very well, someone who had a similar taste in music: Andreas. He played electric guitar, so Sascha founded the band Ghosting with him in 1989, right after a trip to London. In London, Sascha witnessed with his own eyes the epicenter of the emerging goth scene.

He visited clubs like Gossips—the former Batcave—the Camden Palace, and a few others of that style. He was utterly fascinated by the English interpretation of the goth scene, and also by the mix of what is now perceived as typically goth with the influences of punk rock that were unified back then.

Enthused by this idea, he wanted to create his own musical style—a kind of cuvée, a mélange, mainly characterized by electronic rhythms and modern electronic harmonies, with a strong inclination toward classical composition techniques and occasional monotone elements in the style of Kraftwerk and D.A.F.

Andreas and Sascha had their very first joint performance at a school festival at the Goethe-Gymnasium in Bad Ems in 1989. However, they did not play any of their own songs there but performed cover versions of Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin, and other major rock acts—exciting for a school festival back then, but otherwise typical of street musicians of that era.

They then set about writing and recording their own music. Over the course of two years, they produced enough material for two demo tapes. These were titled *Secret Books* and *Black Romantic,* with *Black Romantic* later being released in several different versions.

Secret Books was recorded in truly poor quality because, at that time, Sascha barely owned any audio equipment—just a then already very old four-track cassette recorder, a single effects device (the ART FXR), and a single electronic keyboard, the Roland W-30 sampler. That was the foundation, along with

Andreas's electric guitar, a Marshall amp, a Boss overdrive pedal, and a Boss chorus pedal. That was the entire equipment for *Secret Books.*

Black Romantic, on the other hand, was recorded with a few additional instruments, notably including the Boss flanger. Sascha also had an electric bass with a bass distortion pedal, and above all a new synthesizer he loved: the Oberheim Matrix 1000. This produced very different, much more vivid sounds than the sampler, since the Matrix 1000 was an analog synthesizer. That was the instrumentation of *Black Romantic,* which featured strong classicist elements.

It was not until 1992 that they had their first concert where they performed these songs: in Bonn at the "Ballhaus."

That evening at the Ballhaus, two representatives of Glasnost Records—a young label at the time—were also present. They signed Ghosting to their label, released the *Black Romantic* tape through a larger distributor, and enabled Ghosting to make their first studio recording: the single "Paranoia." Glasnost also announced the first major shows.

Unfortunately, that performance at the Bonn Ballhaus was the only one where Andreas and Sascha played together on stage. Shortly thereafter, they had a falling out, and Sascha had to produce the first studio recording without Andreas. However, his then-partner Diana joined, taking on the vocals. Sascha himself played bass.

Winus Rilinger, who had also helped Eternal Afflict achieve success with the production of the song "San Diego," recorded the songs "Paranoia" and "Luna" with Sascha and Diana, which were then pressed on a 7" vinyl. "Paranoia" was the first truly rousing dance track Ghosting wrote and released.

As mentioned before, at that time it was unusual to perform alone, so Sascha quickly put together a band via a press announcement. Thus came a full lineup with electric guitar, electric bass, a keyboard player, Diana on the microphone as a backing vocalist, and Sascha as the lead singer. For quite some time, this was the largest number of members the band ever had—afterwards, Ghosting would never again have so many.

The band toured throughout Germany and had one particularly noteworthy appearance: they played on the evening of the very first Wave-Gotik concert in Leipzig in 1992. It was a great concert that thrilled both the band and the audience. This event would go down in history as the start of what has been the annual worldwide gathering of goths in Leipzig.

Shortly thereafter, the band got to record its debut album *Romantic Death* at Bruno Kramm's (Das Ich) Danse Macabre Studios—the studio where Bruno recorded his own band Das Ich, as well as other then well-known bands like Relatives Menschsein. Since the band at that point consisted mainly of guitar, bass, and a typical rock lineup, Bruno worked hard to capture the typical goth-rock atmosphere and sound that was then influenced, among others, by The Cure.

Bruno did an excellent job, but during the recording there was a dispute, and Sascha parted ways with all the other band members—an extremely challenging situation for everyone involved, as the recordings were not yet finished. Still, thanks to Bruno's skill, an album was created that is to this day considered a milestone in the band's history.

Looking back, Sascha says: *"As a Sisters fan, I'm actually not that fond of this Cure-heavy album. Still, Bruno—thank you for making it sound so much like The Cure."*

From then on, Sascha realized that he could not fulfill his musical vision alongside other band members. He had a very precise idea of what he wanted. Therefore, he wanted to write new songs as soon as possible to implement that vision.

The second album, *Songs from Fairyland,* already came quite close to his musical ideal at that time. It is heavily synthesizer-driven, and he recorded it almost entirely by himself. From his perspective, the album represents the perfect synthesis of minimalist modern electronics, the dark genre, and classicist composition techniques—this time without electric guitar and electric bass.

At that time, Ghosting concerts became increasingly rare. With ever-changing lineups, various musicians were part of the band, including Holger Wirth, with whom Sascha had a close friendship at the time. Later, Holger pursued his own musical vision with the band Flatline.

The last album Ghosting released on the Glasnost Records label was *Enter My Crypt.* From Sascha's perspective, it came even closer to his own vision, as it was particularly instrumental in nature and leaned even more heavily on classicist elements.

Essentially, the album was based on the Korg Wavestation synthesizer and the Roland W-30 sampler, which had the standard sample library of classical instruments—violins, cellos, double basses, as well as orchestral percussion and flutes, basically the entire orchestral instrumentation.

However, these two albums largely remained inaccessible to a broader audience—likely because, at a time when minimalist music was beginning and simultaneously peaking, they were simply too classicist, too melodic.

The next album, *Lips Like Red,* featured the first song that remains hugely popular to this day: "Bomb the World." Sascha wrote it as a frustrated teenager on a day when he had just listened to "I'd Love the World" by New Model Army. He thought the song was very good, but in his youthful frustration, he thought, "Certainly not 'I'd Love the World'—absolutely not." That's how "Bomb the World" was created—a song that has remained in listeners' minds to this day and continues to rack up high streaming and click numbers.

The lyrics are purely symbolic in nature. Sascha never meant them literally. They were only an expression of a youthful emotional state. Nevertheless, he always distanced himself from any misinterpretation of the song.

By this point, Sascha had already left Bad Ems and moved to Darmstadt in 1993 to study biology. During this phase, he lost interest in purely gothic and dark music—especially since he had already been active in that genre for seven years. Sascha is someone who constantly needs to explore new things.

This led to *L'État C'est Moi,* the last album of this phase. It was more of a potpourri of various styles that he had tried out in recent years, without forming a coherent whole. The only track that particularly stands out from that CD is "And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda," a very distinctive interpretation of the Eric Bogle original.

From that point on, Sascha devoted himself entirely to the Frankfurt techno scene. In clubs like Omen and Dorian Gray, he encountered an entirely new form of musical intensity that fascinated him. First, he tried to imitate these sounds in order to understand the unique aspects of this musical approach.

For him, it was an entirely new world—unlike classical music theory and composition, modern rock, or goth. It was something he had never experienced before and that, in his opinion, could only truly be felt on the dance floors of DJs like Sven Väth, DJ Dag, and Chris Liebing. He was especially fond of Sven Väth's label "Harthouse," which produced the style of techno Sascha so admired. Although various recordings from that era exist, they have never been released to this day.

It was much later, in 2001, that his close friend and roommate Stefan, who also played electric guitar and liked bands like The Cure, motivated him to revive Ghosting. The music was good, and Sascha felt that after about six years, the time had come to move away from techno, which by then was also beginning to bore him.

True to his typical approach, he wanted to create something new. He decided to combine techno elements with Ghosting's goth influences. At the time, it was still very unusual in the goth scene to use techno bass drums or techno basslines in songs—something that is widespread today.

The first release of that period was the album *Der Magische Puls.* This album particularly reflects this new vitality, with songs that sometimes veer almost entirely into techno, but also many tracks that clearly blend both styles.

However, neither the album *Der Magische Puls* nor its songs were particularly well-received—neither in the techno scene nor in the gothic or dark rock scenes, even though a new member, Björn, had joined, bringing the total to two electric guitars.

Only on their last album was there a track, "Lion King," which remains well-known today. But that album also marked the band's farewell for a long time. Ghosting broke up immediately after its release, following a few remaining performances.

Sascha then devoted himself entirely to his academic studies, eventually earning

a doctorate and later focusing on his professional career.

It was only 20 years later that Sascha decided to make music with Ghosting again and release it as well. The first project was a rerecording of the *Black Romantic* songs as well as other pieces from that period, including *Secret Books* and some previously unreleased songs. These were available only in digital form.

With a CD titled *Black Pearls,* the label Dark Dimensions compiled a best-of of Ghosting songs, which naturally included "Lion King." Since then, Sascha has been releasing new songs more or less regularly—again, exclusively digital.

Particularly noteworthy are tracks such as "Der Flämische Totentanz," an interpretation of the oldest known war-related melody from the 15th century, as well as "Kalle Theodor," a reinterpretation of a children's song from Pippi Longstocking.

Since 2003, there have been no more concerts—except for one single exception. That exception was in 2023 for the 30th anniversary of the Wave-Gotik-Treffen, which also represented a satisfying conclusion for Sascha.

At that show, he played all of the band's hits since its founding, accompanied by Frank D'Angelo, whose main band is SITD. The only published recording of this concert is the cover of "Amphetamine Logic" by The Sisters of Mercy, which appears on the digital EP *All Your Dreams.*

That is the story of the band Ghosting so far. It continues—unhurried, without concerts—as Sascha's solo project. But it does go on.